

A. Executive Summary

Responsible Agency: Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Office of Strategic Planning (OSP)

Co-operating Agency: Division of State Parks (TSP)

Introduction

The Office of Strategic Planning (OSP) and the Division of State Parks (TSP) have jointly prepared a comprehensive management plan for Tims Ford State Park as required by the TDEC 4-year Strategic Plan (April 2001) and the Master Plan for State Parks (July 1999). OSP, as the primary planning entity within TDEC, has responsibility for the preparation of Management Plans for each State Park. Each plan will provide a status report on current resources and conditions at the State Park, an evaluation of significant issues, as well as achievable strategies to address these issues.

The Draft Park Management Plan for Tims Ford State Park is the first plan to be developed by OSP. The Division of State Parks' staff at Tims Ford State Park participated in the review and development of this Draft Plan.

As a result of the final Tims Ford Reservoir Land Management and Disposition Plan (June 2000) (as approved by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the State Building Commission), additional consideration was also given to the development of this Draft Plan. The Tims Ford Reservoir Land Management and Disposition Plan (which assigned significant additional lands and recreation resources to the Tims Ford State Park inventory) was developed through a joint TVA and Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) planning effort.

Background

Tims Ford State Park was established in September 1978 on 413 acres of land, which had been transferred to TSP from the Tennessee Elk River Development Agency (TERDA). Initial development at the park consisted of cabins, campground, and various day-use facilities. The transfer in 1997 of an additional 1530 acres of TERDA and TVA lands to the park enabled the state to construct an 18-hole championship golf course and other recreation infrastructure on these lands.

As the present Draft Plan was being prepared, the state and TVA were in the process of transferring an additional 538.1 acres (including 5 lake access areas, an additional campground, and a full service marina) into Tims Ford State Park. An additional 852.9 acres will be assigned to Tims Ford State Park for

management until it is further disposed of by transfer to other agencies or sold for development.

Plan Content

The Draft Plan's major sections are Status Report (G), Significant Issues (H), and Strategies (I). The Status Report Section provides an update on the current status of Tims Ford State Park by assessing the park's natural and cultural resources, recreation and interpretive facilities and programs, operations and management, etc. The Significant Issues Section lists issues that were identified that impact the operation and management of Tims Ford State Park. The final section, Strategies, identifies specific strategies in improving operation and management of Tims Ford State Park. These sections address each of the following topics:

- Land Base Resources
- Natural and Cultural Resource Management
- Visitation
- Park Infrastructure
- Equipment
- Retail Operations and Facilities
- Recreation Facilities and Programs
- Interpretive Facilities and Programs
- Facilities Management and Maintenance
- Safety and Security
- Personnel
- Park Budget and Funding
- TERRM Operations and Resources
- Marketing
- Assessment and Planning
- Management Options, Impacts and Constraints

Public Involvement

OSP is currently seeking public comment on the Draft Tims Ford State Park Management Plan. In order to review the Draft Plan, copies are available at the the following locations:

- ✓ Tims Ford State Park Office
- ✓ TERRM Office
- ✓ Moore County Public Library
- ✓ Franklin County Public Library
- ✓ Coffee County Lannom Memorial Public Library
- ✓ Crouch Library at Motlow State Community College
- ✓ TDEC web-site,
<http://www.state.tn.us/environment/parks/timsford/>

B. Mission for Tennessee State Parks

To preserve and protect, in perpetuity, unique examples of natural, cultural, and scenic areas and provide a variety of safe, quality outdoor experiences through a well-planned and professionally managed system of state parks.

C. Tims Ford State Park Mission

To plan and manage for the protection of the natural, cultural, and scenic areas that are found within Tims Ford State Park, and to provide the opportunity for a variety of outdoor experiences for the park's visitors.

D. Park History

During the mid 1950's, the citizens of the Elk River Valley in Alabama and Tennessee formed the Elk River Development Association (ERDA) in an effort to secure federal assistance to establish a resource development program for the Elk River Valley. Subsequently, the Association enlisted the support of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in this endeavor.

The Tennessee General Assembly reorganized ERDA as the Tennessee Elk River Development Agency (TERDA) in 1963 by enactment of TCA 64-1-301 et seq. The Agency was specifically created for the purpose of “developing and effectuating plans and programs for comprehensive development including the control and development of the water resources of that portion of the Elk River watershed and integrating plans, programs, and development activities with the overall economic development of the area described.” (TCA 64-1-301)

By 1966, TVA and TERDA had entered into a contract to “engage in a cooperative program of comprehensive, unified resource development for the purpose of fostering the orderly physical, economic, and social development of the Elk River area.” This agreement included the appropriation of \$53,000,000 for the construction of the Tims Ford Dam and Reservoir. Justification for this project was to “provide a source of water for municipal, industrial, agricultural, and domestic use and as a recreational resource.” (Contract number TV-2733A)

In March 1969, TERDA, TVA, and the Tennessee Department of Conservation (TDOC) entered into an agreement to evaluate Tims Ford Reservoir as a potential site for a new state park. Factors that led to the selection of the approved site included:

- At least 1,000 acres of land in a usable pattern
- Setting and terrain conducive to park development
- Location on the most attractive portions of the lake
- Good road access

A Master Plan Report published in November 1969 identified a location on Lost Creek as a suitable site for the park. The proposed site consisted of 1,172 acres ranging from rolling to hilly terrain. Of this total, 1,010 acres had been acquired as a part of the Tims Ford State Park project, and 162 additional acres were considered to be necessary for full development of the park's potential. The proposed park was expected to have a capacity of 186,000 visitors per year at the completion of the first phase of development. At the completion of a four-phase development program, for an estimated cost of \$6,483,000, the total capacity of the park was expected to be 368,823 visitors per year.

As a result of the Master Plan Report, 413 acres of land were transferred to TDOC and the first phase of development was completed in September 1978. This phase included:

- Campground (50 sites with water, electricity and central dump station)
- Picnic area
- Recreation building
- Swimming pool
- Administrative office
- Cabins (20)
- Boat launching ramp
- Small Boat Harbor (gas dock, short order restaurant)
- Bicycle Trail (5 miles paved)
- Maintenance center
- Residences (3)

Due in part to the limited land base, as well as the unavailability of funds, additional development was not attempted following the completion of Phase 1. Meanwhile, by 1995, visitation at the park had reached an estimated 622,800 visitors per year, almost double the prediction of the 1969 Master Plan for visitors after Phase 4 development was complete.

In April 1996, the Tennessee General Assembly dissolved TERDA, and its assets and responsibilities were transferred to the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC). The Department subsequently established the Tennessee Elk River Resource Management (TERRM) office to manage these assets. TDEC also requested that TVA issue a permanent recreation easement for 233 acres to TDEC for the expansion of Tims Ford State Park. Simultaneously, approximately 1,297 acres of former TERDA property (now held by TDEC) was incorporated into the park.

The approval by TVA of this land request and the completion of the transfer of the former TERDA lands on June 30, 1997, enabled TDEC to initiate construction of a golf course in the Wiseman Bend area. A contract was developed with Golf Services Inc., now BlackHorse Golf, and an 18 hole Jack Nicklaus designed course was opened in the fall of 1999 as a part of the Bear Trace series of courses. Also in 1999, approximately 2.5 miles of hiking and 1 mile of barrier free multiple use trails were constructed on the additional lands.

E. Park Use Classification

Based on the criteria described in the Tennessee State Parks Use Classification plan, Tims Ford State Park is classified as a **Class 1 Traditional Park**. The description of this and other classifications can be found in [Appendix A](#).

F. Ecoregional Designation

Tims Ford State Park is located on the eastern edge of the Interior Plateau. This ecoregion extends from southern Indiana and Ohio to northern Alabama. Rock types are distinctly different from the coastal plain sands of western Tennessee ecoregions, and elevations are lower than the Appalachian ecoregions to the east. Mississippian to Ordovician-age limestone, chert, sandstone, siltstone and shale compose the landforms of open hills, irregular plains, and tablelands. The natural vegetation is primarily oak-hickory forest, with some area of bluestem parry and cedar glades. This region has the most diverse fish fauna in Tennessee.

A detailed description of the Ecoregional Designations can be found in [Appendix B](#).

Ecoregional Planning

Ecoregion frameworks are valuable tools for environmental resource inventory and assessment, for setting resource management goals, and for developing biological criteria and water quality standards. Current research in natural resources management focuses around the concept of an ecosystem-based approach and ecoregional planning.

The ecosystem approach is “a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way”. It is based on the application of appropriate resource management techniques focused on the levels of biological organization within an ecosystem (processes, functions, interactions among organisms and humans).

The ecoregional planning approach to be used within the State Park System is based upon EPA, USDA Forest Service and Nature Conservancy research and applications already developed within TDEC. This approach encourages biological integrity within the State Park System because each park within a given region will be managed towards similarly defined resource goals and objectives.

Teams will be formed in the eight ecoregions with representatives from each of the parks in that ecoregion. These teams will formulate regional-level goals and objectives for natural resources management within the parks of that region. These goals, objectives, and management strategies will then be incorporated into the individual park management plans and used as a basis for natural resources management at the individual park level. This process is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2001. An addendum on ecoregional goals will be prepared for Tims Ford State Park at that time.

See [Appendix B](#) for Tims Ford State Park location within the ecoregional system.